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IMRAN'S PARTY DECIDES AGAINST COALITION, TO SIT IN OPPOSITION

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24 In the final results declared by Pakistan's Election Commission, Imran's PTI topped the table with 101 seats as independents, Nawaz's PML-N 75, Bilawal's Pakistan Peoples Party 54, MQM-P 17 and smaller parties 17 | P2



Kaun banega Pradhan Mantri

● Nawaz has called for a 'participatory coalition government' minus the PTI. Both PML-N and PPP are holding tough power-sharing talks

● The sticking point is who will head the govt. PPP wants Bilawal as PM. PML-N could propose Shehbaz as PM

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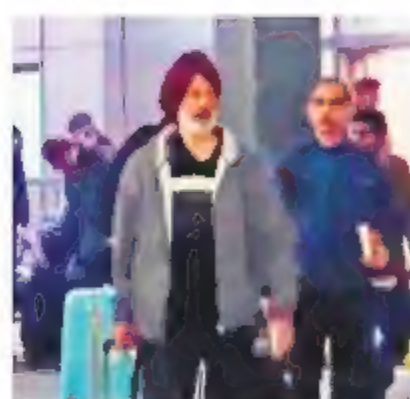
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In diplomatic coup, all 8 naval veterans freed, 7 return to India

Their release comes after 16 months of detention; one of them still in Doha due to a travel ban as he faces another case



Videograb of the veterans arriving at the Delhi airport | P11

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

IN what was decidedly a diplomatic coup, India managed to get its eight naval veterans released from Qatar after 16 months of detention in Doha. It was this newspaper that broke the story of their arrest and kept reporting all its subsequent twists and turns.

After their arrest by the Qatari's Ministry of Interior on

August 30, 2022, all eight veterans were awarded capital punishment last year before their sentences were commuted to multiple years in jail and now they have been set free.

Seven of the veterans landed in Delhi in the wee hours of Monday on an Indigo flight. The one who is yet to return is Commander Purnendu Tiwari. He is out of captivity but continues to be in Doha due to a

travel ban as he faces another case in which he and the CEO of Dhara Global, Khamis Al-Ajmi (retired Royal Oman Air Force squadron leader), are awaiting clearance. The veterans were working at Dhara when they were arrested.

Ajmi was under detention too for some weeks in 2022 but was later released on bail. The Indian government is working on getting Commander Tiwari

back to India at the earliest.

"We have returned India safe and sound. We would like to thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi as this was possible due to his personal intervention and also the Emir of Qatar," said Captain Navtej Singh Gill upon his arrival in Delhi.

In a related development, Prime Minister Modi will travel to Doha on February 14, after inaugurating the BAPS Temple

in Abu Dhabi. Modi will hold bilateral talks with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

The families of the naval veterans lauded the Indian Ambassador in Doha, Vipul, for his unstinting support, updating them about the well being of the veterans all through.

"Ambassador Vipul would talk to us, update us about the well being of our veterans and

also instil confidence in the veterans whenever consular access was granted," said one such family member.

The seven veterans who are back home in India are Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Saubh Vashisht, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta, Commander Amit Nagpal and Sailor Ragesh.

Guv: Guarantees putting money in people's hands, boosting economy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Governor Thaa-warchand Gehlot on Monday said the money that has reached the hands of the people through the state government's five guarantee schemes has given a new boost to the economy.

Addressing the joint session of the state legislature, he said domestic and foreign investment is flowing into the state in a big way and in the last eight months, the total investment has reached over Rs 77,000 crore. "Economic activities are picking up due to the new accumulation of purchasing power among the people due to guarantee schemes," he said.

The government's guarantee schemes have provided solace to the people suffering from growing economic inequality, he said, and added that a large number of applications for programmes is proof of how much these programmes were needed by the economically disadvantaged.

He said the government has successfully implemented all five guarantee schemes - Shakti, Gruha Lakshmi, Gruha Jyothi, Yuva Nidhi and Anna Bhagya. "Due to the implementation of guarantee schemes, more than 1.2 crore families are coming out of the poverty line and rising to middle-class



Governor Thaa-warchand Gehlot addresses the joint session at Vidhana Soudha on Monday | EXPRESS

status. It is a global record that more than five crore people of the state will be promoted to middle-class status by one decision," he said.

He also pointed out that tax collection is increasing and till January-end this year, Karnataka stands first in the country in the rate of growth in GST collection. "This is because a new era of development has begun over the last eight months," he said. Stressing that guarantee schemes launched by the state government are a model for the country, he said, "Other governments are competing to adopt these schemes." P4

CM may announce tunnel roads for B'luru in his budget

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah is likely to announce the much-debated tunnel roads for Bengaluru in his budget to be presented on February 16. The tunnel roads, supposed to ease traffic in the state capital, have been proposed by Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar. Governor Thaa-warchand Gehlot, in his address to the joint session of the state legislature, mentioned that the construction of tunnel roads is intended to reduce traffic congestion in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits. "The feasibility report is being prepared," he added. He pointed out that under the Metro Phase-2 and Reach-5 new line (from Ragigudka to Central Silk Board), which runs for 19.15 km, 16 stations will be double-decker. "At present, 98 per cent progress has been achieved and the line is expected to be commissioned by July 2024," he said.

The governor said work is under way on the Metro project from Central Silk Board to Krishnarajapuram (19.75 km) and under phase-2B from Krishnarajapuram to Kempegowda International Airport, and the two sections are expected to be completed by June 2026. On the Bengaluru Suburban Railway project, he said civil works for the Baiyappanahalli-Chikkabannavara (25 km) corridor are in progress. "The tender for civil works of Heelalige-Rajanakunte (46.24 km) corridor has been finalised and the work will begin soon," he added.

Talks fail, farmers start their Delhi march

2nd round of talks

Monday's was the second round of talks between Union ministers and leaders of farmer organisations. The first meeting was held on February 8

HARPREET BAJWA & UJWAL JALALI @ Chandigarh / New Delhi

FARMERS from Punjab have started moving towards the national capital in a bid to put pressure on the Centre to accept their demands, including a law to guarantee MSP as talks between the Centre and union leaders fell through. Union ministers Piyush Goyal and Arjun Munda on Monday held closed-door deliberations with union leaders but no agree-



Paramilitary personnel equipped with anti-riot gear near the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border at Ghazipur, New Delhi on Monday | PARVEEN NIGHI

ment could be reached. Meanwhile, the Haryana government has taken elaborate measures to keep off the protesters, by blocking the roads

leading to Delhi and clamping Section 144 in 15 districts. In Delhi, the authorities clamped prohibitory orders in the entire city and secured the borders.

ANNUAL REVISION

Bescom seeks 49 paise hike in power tariff

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

As part of an annual exercise, all energy supply companies (Escoms) in the state have proposed to the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) to increase power tariff.

Interestingly, the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom) has sought a hike of 49 paise per unit for domestic consumers (irrespective of category), which is the lowest among all Escoms. It is also much less than what it had proposed last year at Rs 1.36.

KERC allowed a power tariff hike of 70 paise per unit last year. The power tariff is revised every year, accounting for transmission and distribution losses and power purchase agreements. Last year, the revised tariffs were announced on May 12 and they came into effect from April. Gescom has proposed a hike of Rs 1.63 per unit, Mescom 0.59, Hescm 0.57 and Chescom 0.50. P4

TN Guv refuses to read address, walks out

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi once again refused to read the complete address prepared by the state government in the assembly. He also abruptly left the House. P5

Tiger attacks 2 villagers in Bandipur forest range

Mysuru: Two villagers were injured after a tiger attacked them while they were grazing cattle on forest fringes at the foot of Himavad Gopalaswamy Hills on Monday morning. Shiva-shetty (60) and Jawara Shetty (65) from Shivapura village are recovering from minor injuries.

NITISH ATTACKS LALU, WINS TRUST VOTE AMID OPPOSITION WALKOUT

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

BIHAR CM Nitish Kumar on Monday won the confidence motion in the assembly by 129-0 after an opposition walkout. The majority mark is 122 in the 243-member assembly.

Deputy Speaker Maheshwar Hazari, who was on the chair, announced the NDA's victory by voice vote but later allowed a head count on the request of parliamentary affairs minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary.

Three RJD MLAs — Chetan Anand, Neelam Devi and Prahlad Yadav — defected and voted in favour of the ruling alliance despite the party whip mandating them to vote against the government. Speaking in the assembly before the trust vote,



Nitish Kumar arrives for the floor test at Bihar Legislative Assembly | P11

Nitish recalled he had strived to bring all opposition parties on one platform, but the Congress had a problem with him. "Your father (Lalu) was hobnobbing with the Congress. I decided nothing will come out of the opposition's INDIA bloc and left it for good to return to NDA forever," he told leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav

BLISTERING ATTACK FROM TEJASHWI YADAV

Criticising Nitish's claim that he was not feeling good about the mahagathabandhan, Tejashwi said, "Hum log koi naachne gaane ke liye thode hai" (we were not for there for entertainment). If the CM had shared his discomfort, the RJD could have offered outside support to the alliance, he said

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